

VFW FISHING TOURNAMENT RULES 2026

1) REGISTRATION

All boats and anglers, to include Captains and mates, must be registered and entry fees paid to qualify for prizes (Including Calcutta). Any boat that is not previously registered, can register from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 PM Friday June 19 at the **American Legion on College Rd.** Any boat may be substituted prior to the tournament, but must be registered with the tournament committee prior to fishing.

2) CAPTAINS MEETING

At least one person from each boat must attend and is responsible for knowing the rules including any changes that will be announced at the captain's meeting on Friday evening June 20th 7:00 P.M. at the **American Legion on College Rd.**

3) FISHING DAYS

Saturday, June 20th and Sunday, June 21st are the available days to fish. Captains, Crew and Anglers may fish **BOTH DAYS.**

4) FISHING TIMES

7 A.M. to 3 P.M. Saturday **and** Sunday. No lines or teasers or bait (to include live bait, dead bait, chunks or chum) in the water prior to 7 A.M. A fish hooked before 3 P.M. can be played but must be reported to (1) a committee boat or (2) another boat by 3 P.M. The fish may be played until boated but must reach the weigh-in dock no later than 4 P.M.

5) WEIGH IN

Weigh-in 2P.M.-4P.M. at Stock Island Yacht Club and Marina on Stock Island or Triton Sea Center on Big Pine Key

Fish may be brought to the scales by either boat or motor vehicle. Scales will close precisely at 4:00 P.M. An angler with fish in line at 4:00 P.M. that is visible and acknowledged by the weighmaster will be allowed to weigh fish. Fish that are freshly mutilated by other fish or boat (Propellers, etc.) are not allowed to be weighed in. The weighmaster has the discretion to eliminate a fish for mutilation. **All fish must be weighed in on the day they are caught.** In the event of a tie the fish that was weighed in earliest will be the winner.

6) REGULATIONS *****See Addendum # 1

It is the captains' and anglers' responsibility to know and comply with all federal and state regulations including licensing requirements, current recreational size and recreational bag limits and circle hook requirements. All anglers must meet current federal and state licensing requirements.

Winning fish in each category, Dolphin, Wahoo, Tuna, Grouper and Snapper.

7) COMMUNICATIONS

The tournament channel is TBA at the Captain's meeting.

8) **ROD AND REEL RULES**

This is a rod and reel, hook and line tournament. The following practices are illegal in this tournament: (a) use of hand line or rope or cable directly attached to the line, leader, or lure without a release device, (b) spearing, harpooning, free-gaffing or shooting a fish with a spear gun or firearm, (c) use of electric reels, winches or "bandit" type reels, (d) transferring fish from one boat to another.

9) **PRIZES ***** See Addendums #2, #3, #4 and #5**

There are cash prizes for the heaviest fish in each category

BOAT AWARDS.

1 st place Dolphin	\$ 15,000.00
2 nd place Dolphin	\$ 5,000.00
3 rd place Dolphin	\$ 3,000.00
4 th place Dolphin	\$ 1,000.00
1 st place Wahoo	\$ 600.00
1 st place Tuna	\$ 600.00
1 st place Snapper	\$ 600.00
1 st place Grouper	\$ 600.00
VFW SLAM	\$ 1,000.00 (Each Day)
4 Dolphin Aggregate	\$ 1,000.00 (Each Day)

ANGLER AWARDS

1 st place Pee-wee	\$ 500.00 (Age 10 and under)
1 st place Junior Angler	\$ 500.00 (Age 11-15)
1 st place Lady Angler	\$ 500.00
1 st place Active Duty Angler	\$ 500.00 (U.S. Armed Forces)
1 st place Veteran Angler	\$ 500.00 (veteran US Armed Forces, not active duty/Reserve)
1 st place Senior Angler	\$ 500.00 (age 65 or older)
1 st place First Responder	\$ 500.00 (EMT, Paramedic, Firefighter, Police Officer)

All anglers (Including Captains and Mates) on boats winning a prize above, must submit to a polygraph exam if asked to do so. No one under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs will be allowed to be polygraphed. Failure to submit to, and pass the polygraph exam will result in disqualification of vessel and catch and forfeiture of any and all prizes including Calcutta.

In the event that no fish are caught in one or more categories, that prize will go back into the prize pool and be distributed proportionately among other winners.

If there are no qualifying fish caught in any category, winners will be drawn for 1st (35%), 2nd (25%), 3rd (20%), 4th (15%), 5th (5%).

10) **PROTESTS**

All protests must be submitted prior to 6P.M. on the day of fishing. All protests must be written and accompanied by \$200.00 which will be refunded if the protest is upheld. All decisions by the tournament committee are final.

11) **AWARDS CEREMONY**

There will be a dinner and awards ceremony held, starting at 6:30 P.M. on Sunday, June 21st at The American Legion, 5610 College Rd Key West, Florida.

12) **PRIZE DISTRIBUTION**

Calcutta prizes are not subject to limitation. (Example: angler who wins heaviest dolphin is also eligible for Calcutta(s), if entered.) See Calcutta addendum. Sharing and/or culling the catch for other anglers in a crew to win a prize is a violation.

13) **VIOLATIONS**

Any violation(s) will result in the entire catch being disqualified and forfeiture of and all prize money to include Calcutta. There will be no refund of entry fees including Calcutta fees.

ADDENDUM # 1 - The five categories of fish in the VFW tournament are Dolphin, Wahoo, Tuna, Grouper, and Snapper. In the Tuna category, the eligible species are Blackfin, Skipjack, and Yellowfin. In the Grouper category, the eligible species are Black and Red. In the Snapper category, the eligible species are Yellowtail, Mutton, Mangrove, and Lane.

ADDENDUM # 2 - The intent of the rule change allows all entrants to fish both days with all legal, qualifying fish to be entered for prizes.

ADDENDUM # 2- The intent is to differentiate between Boat Award and Angler Award. Boat Award means that any number of anglers including captain and mate(s) may handle the rod, handle and adjust the reel, and fight the fish. The fish will be eligible for a Boat Award only in the five eligible categories. For the Angler Award, the angler must fight the fish the entire time. Upon the fish striking the bait/lure, any other crew member may remove the rod from the rod holder, and hand it to the angler. At that point the angler who receives the rod is the "angler of record". Should he or she hand the rod off to another angler, allow the rod or reel to be touched by anyone else, that fish will be eligible only for the Boat Award. In the interest of good sportsmanship, we ask all participants to understand and comply with this rule.

ADDENDUM # 4- VFW Slam will be the boat with the heaviest combined weight of three of the five eligible categories. VFW slam prize will be awarded each day.

ADDENDUM # 5- 4 Dolphin aggregate winner will be the BOAT with the heaviest combined weight of 4 Dolphin. The dolphin aggregate prize will be awarded each day.